Augment
Your Existing HR Plan
To Fit A Post-COVID World

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Many companies may never "return to normal." But most are poised to "return to work."

How can HR leaders make that return as safe, seamless and normal as possible? Experts from Facebook, Hoot suite and the legal compliance community have insight, answers and suggestions that'll work for any size company or industry.

Most HR and company leaders will likely need to augment, pivot or even re-write HR plans with the post-COVID-19 return to work and the workplace.

"It certainly was intense trying to make it all come together quickly," said Karen O'Neill, Director of People Growth at Facebook in the HRMorning Culture & Community Masterclass: Augment Your Existing HR Plan To Fit A Post-COVID World.

WHAT'S CRITICAL TO THE PIVOT

Like most companies, Facebook had to make a fast pivot to almost exclusive remote work conditions.

During the quick transition, O'Neill and other HR leaders across the dispersed workforce found three critical factors:

- **Communication.** No matter where employees were, the company, and more importantly, managers, needed to stay in contact with employees. They used the Workplace From Facebook application to share information, create teams, share documents, meet and more. And they did it regularly – almost daily, when necessary.

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- **Education.** "It was important to equip our management population," O'Neill said, because everything – information, feedback, announcements, emotions, etc. – would come to them from employees and go through them from leadership. O'Neill gave managers tools, and time to ask and respond to:

  What's difficult?
  What's on your mind?
  What are you hearing around you?

- **Centricity.** Information, projects and demands still changed often as people continue to work remotely. So Facebook created one central location for information and tools managers would need to support employees and help the organization continue to thrive.

FEEDBACK ESSENTIAL TO HR PLAN CHANGES

As the pandemic wore on, leaders recognized remote work worked! It could – and should be – an HR model going forward.

So leaders inside and outside of HR worked together to augment their HR plan. Mission critical: Keep employees informed and part of the experience throughout the evolution.

"We're giving people all the context they need," says O'Neill. Facebook HR didn't just pass information and edicts along to employees. They helped employees understand the thought, work and perspective that went into changes, decisions and new approaches.

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Most importantly, a lot of that context came from employee feedback. Here's how they have and continue to gather employee feedback:

- **Real-time.** When HR puts out updates on anything, employees can share thoughts and/or chat via the feedback channel on the internal communication app.

- **Micro-Pulses.** Facebook regularly asks different groups of people a set of three questions on an issue they're working on or a subject they'll address. They change the group regularly, so they don't "survey fatigue" anyone.

- **Annual surveys on the employee experience.** This helps set the baseline for all the other frequent surveying throughout the year.

- **Live Q&A with CEO Mark Zuckerberg.** Yes, he gets on live video with employees and answers their submitted and real-time questions!

MOVING FORWARD INTO THE REMOTE WORK ERA

Like many companies, Facebook has decided to move toward a total remote work model.

"It's an equalizer," says O'Neill. "No one is at a disadvantage."

The change comes with challenges. HR pros need to work on policies, processes and best practices for a global workforce. What works in one corner of the world may not be ideal for another.

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"When you're building for a remote workforce, use your existing plan," says Sameer Chowdhri, Global Head, Workplace for HR at Facebook. "Take a step back and scale it for the new reality. Be agile to work with feedback."

They've found a few key practices work well so far:

● **Think with a remote mindset.** "Now, everything we build, it's done for anywhere," Chowdhri says. Every new policy and practice needs to pass the "will this work for remote work?" test. Same goes for established policies and practices. They look at how to adapt them for working from home – or eliminate them.

● **Recognize it's an "a sync effort."** Because people don't work physically together, and across time zones and continents, Facebook is all about the asynchronous work (when people aren't working together or at the same time). They can connect and communicate in real-time when necessary, but it doesn't always need to happen.

● **Create structure.** On-site, Facebook had a relatively informal culture. But the HR team realized they "need to be more structured because structure makes it more equitable with remote employees," O'Neill said.

● **Adapt the experience.** They used to think about the office experience and workplace culture within a working space. Now they focus on designing experiences – from on boarding to team building to training – as "Facebook experiences," focused on the company culture.

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3 GREAT REMOTE WORK EXPERIENCES

Employees who continue to work remotely need to feel connected to the company and their colleagues.

Here are three tactics to help employees build or continue collegial relationships.

1. Tweak great on-site experiences for remote situations

When employees worked on-site together at Hootsuite, IT created the "Random Coffee" algorithm that paired employees who weren't familiar, but worked near each other, to meet for coffee and connect. Grace Carter, Director of Internal Communications, said employees gave the program good reviews. So they continued the pairing, broadening the opportunity for dispersed employees to "meet." Now pairs get on video calls to chat over coffee.

2. Add meaningful video

Carter and the HR team continued to look at what else worked well on-site. They also got feedback from employees through surveys and focus groups on what they hoped for in a remote work environment. They found employees wanted:

- Visible leadership
- Trust and transparency in strategy and decisions
- Social interaction and ability, and
- Sense of purpose and meaning in their work.

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That translated into more live video opportunities for remote employees. Some are group meetings. Others are live Q&A sessions with the C-suite. And plenty are social opportunities for employees.

Admittedly, Carter said they're creating some requirements for calling video meetings, so employees don't get "meetingitis."

3. Adapt to the new norm

Similarly, at Facebook, HR recognized a long-standing, successful tradition that might have fallen by the wayside as new employees on boarded remotely.

Facebook would put together a group of six employees from across functions who happen to start around the same time. They would do some general training together and got to interact quite a bit, sharing their new employee experiences. It's helped many employees get engaged in the organization and make connections over time.

In fact, Chowdhri said he still stays in close contact with the group he started with many years ago.

So HR shifted the program for new employees, who might not even set foot on a Facebook site. They still get a group together, O'Neill explained. They do most of their interacting on video conferences, but they get to do the same kind of training and experience-sharing.

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